willing suspension of his own human instinctive nature, he releases the better side of it into the open possibility of a life inspired and informed by higher values. Roderick Hudson and Christopher Newman have no buttressing supports for their American innocence which is exposed to the dangers of European experience. But both of them act naturally in terms of an American conscience purified by contact with evil outside themselves, and thereby become refined as individuals; and, having recovered their freedom of open, uninhibited action, they turn it in the direction of human solicitude. Their capacity for charity and forgiveness is a mark of their cultivated refinement. Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* makes the wrong, instead of the right choice; and the knowledge of her husband's imperfection gives her the legitimate opportunity of undoing the personal harm resulted from her mistaken choice. But she takes full responsibility for the consequences of her choice, and even reinforces her ideal of the unretrenched life by integrating her shocks of suffering self-recognition into a full-blown consciousness of the mixed quality of life itself. Life deals with her harshly, no matter what the orginating causes of Isabel's humilitation; yet she refuses to deal harshly with life. She becomes an equal and a co-rival of nature in her capacity for a healing openness of possibility; and her refinement well becomes her title, ''heiress of ail ages''. In Isabel's self-surrender lies the secret of human refinement, which in its turn redeems its pledges to her.

In the novels of the middle period, James explores the ambivalent nature of refinement, which, pre-empted of irreducible human integrity, becomes a force for evil. The characters in these novels are either unrefined, or are enemies of refinement, or are ineffectual agents of refinement. In the world of actual evil, without the possibilities of extended human awareness, refinement either defeats an inherent good, or converts it precipitously into its opposite, (n a world of superficial good, on the other hand, refinement becomes a

prey to over-reaching self-righteousness, and loses the name of refinement.
Refinement as an ego-centric fact of culture can only walk on the crutches of a self-denominating illusion.

In the major novels, James moves into those areas of human experience and human consciousness, in which refinement has not only learnt to walk, but walk upright with graceful ease. Refinement can exist in a world albeit the evil which underlies life as a generic presence. It has the strength of it? inner spiritual resources, ano* car?